

PĀṆINI AS A FRONTIER GRAMMARIAN

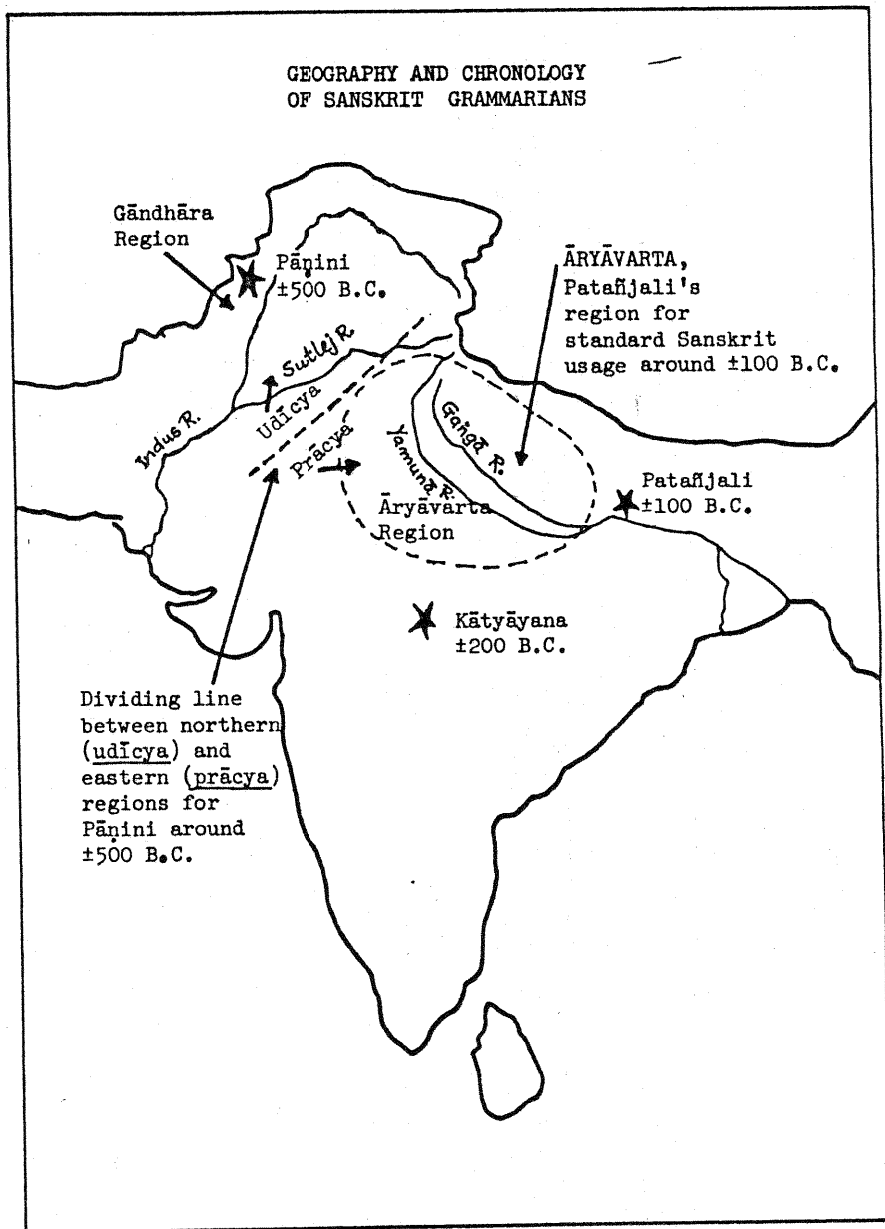
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Recent research has made it increasingly clear that there are serious gaps in our understanding of Pāṇini and that the so-called tradition of Pāṇinian commentators is not nearly as infallible as it has often been taken to be. Part of the reason for this situation is that the tradition looked at Pāṇini purely from an atemporal and ageo-graphical point of view as being an ancient sage who knew all the secrets of this eternal language, i.e. Sanskrit. However, from a modern point of view, we can reach more fruitful results, if we see Pāṇini as a product of his time and as someone who came from the town of Salātura (near modern Peshawar) from the northwestern frontier area of the Indian subcontinent. By Pāṇini's time, the brahmanical culture and the Sanskrit language had already penetrated deeply into the heart of the Indian subcontinent, but the usage of Sanskrit was not homogeneous in different regions. Pāṇini does occasionally refer to these geographical variations in the usage of Sanskrit, but we can safely assume that he primarily describes a variety of Sanskrit which had regional peculiarities of its own. Many of these peculiarities presumably did not exist in mainland Sanskrit, and hence the later commentators, who came from eastern and southern India, had a tough time in dealing with several of his rules. They offered explanations of his rules, which were necessarily more in accordance with Sanskrit as it was known to them, than historically faithful representations of Pāṇini's own intentions.

The map on the following page shows the relative geographical positions of Pāṇini as opposed to his ancient commentators Kātyāyana and Patañjali. These grammarians were separated not only by time and geographical distance, but the features of the particular varieties of Sanskrit they were dealing with were also significantly different. Patañjali himself refers to many instances of dialectal variation (MB, vol. I, sec. I, p. 54). While Pāṇini's Sanskrit had three different accents for vowels, the eastern dialects of Sanskrit had only two accents, as can be seen from the description of accents in the Bhāṣikasūtra. Additionally, these accents lost their phonemic value by the time of later commentators. While there was optional nasality of final simple vowels in Pāṇini's Sanskrit (cf. Pāṇini 8.4.57), this feature apparently did not extend to other dialects (Deshpande 1979: 114). These differences were such that they often obliterated whole domains of Pāṇini's purely oral metalanguage, which made use of accents and nasality of vowels, among other phonetic means. It is now a difficult task to go back to Pāṇini's own regional Sanskrit and to try to evaluate his rules in light of the very limited independent linguistic evidence which comes from this region. In this paper, I shall deal with two examples, one from phonology and one from syntax, which demonstrate that Pāṇini's rules were meant to apply to a distinct regional dialect of Sanskrit, and not to what we know now as Classical Sanskrit.

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FRONTIER PHONOLOGY:

P.8.3.23 (mo'nusvārah) says that a word-final m, before a consonant, is replaced by ṁ, (anusvāra) a form of unassimilated nasality. By this rule, we can have the following sandhi changes:

<u>kim</u> + <u>hasati</u>	>	<u>kiṁhasati</u>	[The sign "ṁ" indicates a state of sandhi.]
<u>kim</u> + <u>hmalayati</u>	>	<u>kiṁhmalayati</u>	
<u>kim</u> + <u>hnute</u>	>	<u>kiṁhnute</u>	

P.8.4.58 (anusvārasya yayi parasavarnah) says that an anusvāra, ṁ, is further assimilated to the following stop or semi-vowel (= yay in Pāṇini). The ṁ is replaced by a nasal consonant homorganic with the following consonant. P.8.4.59 (vā padāntasya) makes this process of assimilation optional, or preferable (a la Kiparsky 1979), for a word-final ṁ. For example:

<u>taṁ</u> + <u>mama</u>	>	<u>taṁmama</u>
<u>taṁ</u> + <u>na</u>	>	<u>taṁna</u>
<u>taṁ</u> + <u>kaḥ</u>	>	<u>taṁkaḥ</u>
<u>taṁ</u> + <u>ca</u>	>	<u>taṁca</u>

Now we come to a relatively strange sandhi phenomenon. P.8.3.26 (he mapare vā) states: "A word-final m, before hm, optionally, or preferably (a la Kiparsky 1979), is replaced with ṁ", i.e. is only optionally, or marginally, replaced by ṁ. P.8.3.27 (napare nah) says: "A word-final m, before hn, is optionally, or preferably, replaced with ṁ", i.e. only optionally, or marginally, replaced by ṁ. The tradition offers the following examples:

<u>kim</u> + <u>hmalayati</u>	>	<u>kiṁhmalayati</u> / <u>kiṁhmalayati</u>
<u>kim</u> + <u>hnute</u>	>	<u>kiṁhnute</u> / <u>kiṁhnute</u>

Kātyāyana, in his comments on these rules, extends this process to the treatment of the word-final m before the clusters hy, hv and hl, where by his extended rule, the word-final m before these clusters is optionally, or preferably, replaced by ṁ, ṁ and ṁ, respectively. For example:

<u>kim</u> + <u>hyah</u>	>	<u>kiṁhyah</u> / <u>kiṁhyah</u>
<u>kim</u> + <u>hvalayati</u>	>	<u>kiṁhvalayati</u> / <u>kiṁhvalayati</u>
<u>kim</u> + <u>hlādayati</u>	>	<u>kiṁhlādayati</u> / <u>kiṁhlādayati</u>

Historically speaking, it is clear that there are two stages of this rule. Pāṇini presents a restricted phase applicable only before the clusters hm and hn, while Kātyāyana presents an extension of the same process to hy, hv and hl. The later tradition of Sanskrit grammarians and their Western followers combine the rules of Pāṇini and Kātyāyana and create a general rule applicable to all the clusters. The traditional Sanskrit grammarians were themselves neither interested in the history of the language nor in explaining the "why" of this peculiar process of sandhi.

W.D. Whitney, W.S. Allen and Louis Renou are three representative modern scholars who had something to say about this peculiar process. Their explanations are self-evident and need little elaboration. These explanations are quoted below:

- A. "Before r, a sibilant, or h, it (i.e. m) becomes anusvāra. But if h is immediately followed by another consonant (which can only be a nasal or a semi-vowel), the m is allowed to be assimilated to that following consonant. This is because the h has no position of the mouth-organs peculiar to itself, but is uttered in the position of the next sound. The Prātiśākhya do not take any notice of the case." (Whitney 1889: 71)
- B. "This sandhi is clearly due to the lack of oral articulation in the h, so that the first relevant articulation is the following consonant (it might even be that h and m / n in such cases were simultaneous articulations)." (Allen 1962: 83)
 "It evidently recognizes the fact that the two processes of breath and nasality may overlap, whether partially or wholly; that this was the case is strongly suggested by the so-called metathesis in Prakrit developments of the type bambhana < brāhmaṇa etc., as also by Pāṇini's optional prescription of junction-forms such as kinhnute beside kinhnute." (Allen 1953: 77)
- C. "Les gr. autorisent devant h + consonne, c'est-à-dire devant h + m n (P), h + y l v (vārt.) le traitement de m final conforme à la situation de m devant sonante." (Renou 1961: 35)
 "Les groupes h + l y v ou nasale peuvent se prononcer avec métathèse de h." (Renou 1961: 5)

Whitney brings in the notion of assimilation, an explanation not used by the Sanskrit grammarians. They only talked in terms of replacements. But Whitney also says that h has no position of the "mouth-organs" peculiar to itself and is uttered in the position of the next sound. Allen also echoes this notion, but he additionally thinks of the possibility of "simultaneous articulations". He refers to the metathesis in Prakrit, but does not suggest that as the cause of this peculiar sandhi. Renou suggests that all h-clusters in Sanskrit were actually pronounced with metathesis and that this is the basis of this peculiar sandhi.

Whatever the merits of these generalized explanations, if any one of them were valid at the time of Pāṇini, then the only way to describe his restricted sandhi rules would be to say that he either gave incomplete rules, or that the linguistic situation in his times was somehow markedly different. None of the above-mentioned scholars dealt with this historical dimension of the problem.

One possible way to deal with this question is to check the linguistic information which is independently available from this northwest frontier region. Our data consist of Prakrit inscriptions and Buddhist texts from the region and our knowledge of the Iranian languages such as Avestan and Old Persian. Mehendale (1948: 230-37)

shows that optional metathesis of the h-initial clusters is seen in most Prakrit inscriptions dating from the third century B.C., but the northwestern frontier has no h in its Prakrit reflexes for the Sanskrit hm and sn. The Prakrit inscriptions from this region show m for hm and n for sn of Sanskrit. Also the Prakrit text, Gandhari Dharma-pada, which is also from this region, has metathesized clusters nh and vh, but it shows bramana or brammana for Sanskrit brāhmaṇa. In the geographically adjacent Avestan, one can have -hm-, but word-initially h is deleted. There is no hn, because Iir s does not change to h before n. We do have word-initial hy and hv, derived from Iir sy and sv respectively. About Old Persian, Hassan (1971: 189) says that Old Persian orthography does not represent the /h/ in front of m, r, or n, even when they are not word-initial.

Thieme (1955: 438) says: "Yāska, who is younger than Pāṇini, but older than Patañjali ..., already refers (Nirukta 2.2.) to the Iranian verb śavati 'go' (OIran. syav / šav), proving thus the possibility of speech contact between speakers of Aryan Indic and Iranian at this time." It then seems most likely that Pāṇini's northwestern Sanskrit was more like the northwestern Prakrits and the eastern Iranian languages where the treatment of h in hm and hn was markedly different from clusters like hy and hv. It seems very plausible that the two peculiarly restricted rules in Pāṇini reflect this phenomenon. Since the later Sanskrit grammarians were physically removed from this frontier region, and were in the midst of Prakrit speakers, the metathesis of all h-initial clusters was the context in which they spoke their Sanskrit. Therefore, it seems logical to assume that they generalized the particular sandhi rules to other h-initial clusters to reflect a predominantly Prakritized pronunciation of Sanskrit.

FRONTIER SYNTAX:

Now we shall briefly consider an example of frontier syntax in Pāṇini. Let us consider the following rules of Pāṇini:

- A. P.3.3.10 (tumun-ṇvulau kriyāyām kriyārthāyām): "The affixes tumUN and ṇvUL (NOTE: The upper-case letters are metalinguistic markers in Pāṇini) are added to a verb-root which denotes an action which is the purpose of another action."
EXAMPLE: rāmaḥ bhoktum grhaṁ yāti : "Rāma goes home to eat."
- B. P.3.3.158 (saṁāna-karṭrkeṣu tumun): "The affix tumUN is added to a verb-root which co-occurs (upapada) with a verb of 'desire' and also has the same agent as that of 'desiring'."
EXAMPLE: rāmaḥ gantum icchati : "Rāma (himself) wants to go."
- C. P.3.4.21 (saṁāna-karṭrkayoḥ pūrvakāle): "The gerund-affix Ktvā is added to a verb-root which denotes an action which occurs before another action and has the same agent as that of the other action."
EXAMPLE: rāmaḥ grhaṁ gatvā svapiti : "Having gone home, Rāma sleeps."

- D. P.3.1.7 (dhātoḥ karmanāḥ samāna-kartrkāḍ icchāyām vā): "The affix saN (which yields a desiderative verb) is added to a verb-root which denotes an action which is the patient of 'desire' and has the same agent as that of 'desiring'."
- EXAMPLE: rāmaḥ jīgamiṣati : "Rāma (himself) wants to go."

Of these four rules, the first rule is different from the other three rules. While these three rules are conditioned by having the two actions involved in these constructions have the same agent, the first rule does not contain any such restriction. Can we have a construction such as "I give you an apple to eat" by P.3.3.10? There is no such question concerning the other rules. One cannot have an infinitive construction in Classical Sanskrit to express: "I want you to go". The same is true of the desiderative construction. The gerunds in Classical Sanskrit also have the same restriction, and hence one cannot have a gerund construction to express: "Jack having gone home, Jill cries".

Then why should Pāṇini not have put the same condition in the rule P.3.3.10? This question worried the Pāṇinian commentators to death, and each of them came up with a different solution. I have discussed these "solutions" in detail elsewhere (Deshpande 1980: 33-46), and suffice it to say that the common factor of all these "solutions" is that the Classical Sanskrit infinitive constructions to denote the sense of purpose are equally conditioned by having the same agent for both the actions. Even though Pāṇini's rule does not have this restriction, the commentators claim that it cannot generate sentences with two different agents. This view of the commentators was supported by the Classical Sanskrit usage, where such constructions of the infinitive of purpose with different agents are so rare that they can hardly be considered to represent a norm. Also, whenever authors used such deviant constructions, their commentators took them to task. Obviously the commentators were obliged to interpret Pāṇini in light of the usage known to them. What did Pāṇini himself intend by his rule P.3.3.10? Did he intend to generate constructions with different agents? Did he intend that a restrictive condition be interpreted into his rule, even though it is not explicitly stated? Or, is Pāṇini plainly inconsistent?

Two years ago, during a long-drawn illness, I began reading Sanskrit medical texts on Ayurveda. I could not detect a cure for my illness, but I found a treasure of "strange" infinitive constructions. Constructions such as pātum asmai prayacchet "The doctor should give the medicine to him to drink" are strewn all over the oldest portions of the Caraka-saṁhitā and a few other older texts on medicine. (cf. Caraka-saṁhitā, pp. 259, 260, 347, 349, 588 and 589). According to the historians of Indian medicine, the oldest portion of this text goes back to about 700 B.C. and it embodies the teaching of Atreya Punarvasu who is said to have been at the court of the king Nagnajit of Gāndhāra, cf. Atrideva Vidyalankar 1964: 27; 1960: 163 and 190. One does not find these constructions in the later additions to the same text made in other parts of India at different times, and they are also absent from all other later texts on medicine. Thus,

the available evidence seems to connect these constructions of infinitives of purpose with different agents with the northwest frontier region around the time of Pāṇini. Thus, it makes it most likely that Pāṇini's unrestricted rule was meant to generate such constructions as well. This is a significantly different conclusion from what I myself had been able to state in my earlier work (Deshpande 1980: 45-46). Such constructions were not commonly found in other parts of India and the later Sanskrit grammarians could not accept them as grammatical. Thus, we can appreciate Pāṇini's grammar in a more realistic manner, if we attempt to compare his rules with linguistic data from his own region. (A fuller treatment of the textual evidence will be presented in a future publication.)

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